

Challenges in Arabic-English Translation: A Study on EFL Students

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Abstract: *This study investigates lexical-semantic challenges faced by Moroccan EFL students in Arabic-English translation. Based on responses to a translation test, issues such as idiomatic expressions, euphemisms, collocations, and synonymy were identified. Findings reveal a need for enhanced pedagogical strategies to address cultural and lexical disparities, improving translation proficiency in academic settings.*

Keywords: translation challenges, Arabic-English translation, EFL learners, lexical-semantic issues, cultural competence

1. Introduction

Translation is one of the most important means of communication among various languages and cultures. It allows for the prosperity of human experiences as a result of linguistic and cultural exchange between languages and civilisations. The translation process requires translators to have diverse skills and capabilities to produce contextually appropriate target texts. However, translators and particularly EFL translation learners face plenty of translation challenges that deserve investigation to understand the underlying reasons behind the phenomenon and engage in the improvement of translation pedagogy.

Among several types of translation challenges learners encounter when translating between two notably distinct languages - Arabic and English- whether linguistic, cultural or technical, lexical-semantic problems are considered significant intricacies that can distort the quality of the target language. The capacity of providing adequate lexical and semantic equivalent when rendering texts across Arabic and English is an essential skill that translation pedagogy should inculcate in EFL learners at Moroccan universities.

The study explores the lexical-semantic challenges EFL learners encounter when translating between Arabic and English. It investigates the way EFL students handle challenges like lack of lexicalization in the target language, synonyms, collocations, idiomatic expressions, euphemisms as well as other culturally specific items. By analysing EFL students' responses to a translation test that contains sentences in both Arabic and English, the purpose of the study is to address this particular aspect of translation problems encountered by translation learners and highlight the possible improvements of translation teaching methodologies in Moroccan universities.

Significance of the study

This study highlights the critical need for cultural and lexical awareness in translation pedagogy, offering insights to enhance EFL education and professional translation training. Given that lexical-semantic competence is a crucial component of translation competencies, it is an attempt to

stress the need for a wholistic translation pedagogy that takes into account all translation competencies in the teaching of translation in academic settings. Although it focuses only on few aspects of lexical-semantic translation challenges, the study draws attention on the vital role in dealing with translation challenges.

Research question

The study's research questions can be stated as follows:

Do EFL students at Ibn Tofail university in Kenitra, Morocco find difficulty in translating lexical items between Arabic and English?

Among the lexical-semantic issues targeted in the study, which are the most prominent types of translation problems mostly frequent in students' translations?

2. Literature Review

1) Lexical-semantic non-equivalence

'Each language articulates or organizes the world differently. Languages do not simply name existing categories; they articulate their own'

(Culler 1976, 21–22)

One primary challenge translators face while translating is finding the right vocabulary words in the target language that carries the same semantic load of the source language. Improper use of vocabulary words in translation will undoubtedly impact the whole meaning of the source language and cause a semantic non-equivalence. In linguistics, the lexicon of a particular language refers to the repertoire of lexemes (vocabulary) and expressions the language possesses and that are used by speakers of that language to communicate meaning (Lyon, 1981), whereas semantics is defined as the study of meaning in a certain language as well as the mental interpretation of its linguistic signs (Hurford et al., 2007). So, regarding the paramount role the lexicon and semantics play in meaning delivery in translation, translators are faced with the challenge of adapting the meaning expressed in the source text to the different alternatives in a totally different target language.

That is, translators are expected to deal with diverse terminological variations of languages' lexicon namely; synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, homonymy (homophones and homographs), polysemy, metonymy, synecdoche, collocations, in addition to the issues of lexical gaps or lack of direct lexicalization and equivalents, and lexical ambiguity due to polysemous and homonymous concepts.

According to Baker (2017), in translation, non-equivalence at the lexical level refers to the absence or lack of equivalent words in the target language. Baker draws a list of the possible types of lexical problems that arise when translating between two languages:

- **Culture-Specific Concepts:** Translation difficulties arises here when the target language cannot express a particular concept as the source language because it is unique to that particular culture. Words related to religious, social and cultural lexis are good examples of these concepts.
- **Unlexicalized Concepts:** These are concepts that have no one to one equivalent and that must be expressed using a combination of items together. For instance, the word "standard" can be translated through explanations and paraphrasing.
- **Semantic Fields and Boundaries:** Some languages tend to express a concept in a single word but in others it is semantically complex to present the same concept in one word. Translators are then asked to explain and convey the meaning in more than one specific word.
- **Connotative and Denotative Meaning:** In translating these types of concepts, translators need to be well equipped with both denotative and connotative implications to ensure an accurate rendering of the source language nuances.
- **Collocation and Idiomatic Usage:** Most collocational and idiomatic expressions have no word-for-word equivalents in translation as they are often language-specific. Translators may find it difficult to present functional or contextual equivalents that serve the same meaning in the target language. For example, the idiomatic expression "buy the farm" can be mistranslated if the translator is not fully conscious of the cultural nuance and origin of the expression and its intended meaning.
- **Synonymy and Polysemy:** Synonymous and polysemous concepts are two of the most challenging lexical problems in translation. Words have generally more than one meaning, or many words are used to identify the same concept which present some lexical issues when translating.

2) Arabic-English Lexical Issues in Translation

a) The absence of TL equivalents (lack of lexicalization)

One of the main difficulties translators face when transmitting a text from one language into another is 'lexical gap' or 'lack of lexicalization' of certain lexical items in the target language. The terms 'lexical gaps' and 'lexical holes' are both used interchangeably in the translation literature as well as the terms 'empty linguistic symbols' (Wang, 1989), 'empty spaces in a lexeme cluster' (Fan, 1989), 'a vacuum in the vocabulary structure of a language' (Rajendran, 2001) and 'a lexical lacuna'. A lexical gap occurs whenever a source language expresses a concept with a lexical unit whereas the target language expresses the same concept with a free

combination of words (Hutchins and Somers, 1992). It is also attributed to 'unlexicalized' concepts or objects in the target language (Lyons, 1977, p.303). Baker argues that non-equivalence at the lexical level means that there is no direct equivalent for a word that occurs in the source text (Baker, 1992, p.20). For example, the verb 'حج' in Arabic has no specific equivalent in English (N. Abdelaal, 2020, p.96). Also, the English word 'standard' does not have an exact Arabic equivalent (Baker, 2017, p.20). In such cases translators tend to provide approximate equivalents to approach the meaning expressed by these lexemes.

The verb 'حج' is translated by 'do/perform/act pilgrimage' and 'standard' by 'مقياس' or 'معياري' (N. Abdelaal 2020, pp.96-97). Moreover, words or expressions which have no near equivalents to their semantic meaning are paraphrased in the target language such as the Arabic expressions 'زكاة الفطر' and 'الحرور العين' which are translated by 'an amount of money or food the Muslim gives to poor people after fasting the whole month of Ramadan' and 'extremely beautiful females of bright complexion and lovely eyes' (Sadiq. S, 2010, p.12). Another example of lexical gaps is the Arabic word 'جهاد' which is connotatively and denotatively different of any possible equivalents in English and which is sometimes transliterated to 'Jihad' or translated as 'striving' in a holy war (N. Abdelaal, 2020, pp.96-97).

Lack of lexicalization also includes cases when one specific concept is referred to by one single word in a certain language while expressed in a number of words in another (Abdelaal, 2020, p. 98). A lexical problem arises between English and Arabic when for example one lexical unit is not translated by one specific equivalent but it instead takes multiple forms in the source language such as family vocabulary in English. Words like "uncle" and "cousin" are expressed by different lexical units in Arabic. "Uncle" can be translated as "عم" or "أخ" and "cousin" by "ابن العم", "ابن العمة", "ابن الخال", "ابنة العم", "ابنة العمة", "ابنة الخال", "ابنة الخالة" which creates a serious lexical problem for translators (Ibid, 98).

b) Synonymy

Synonymy means the sameness or when two or more words have similar meanings and are used interchangeably in any context to substitute one another (Ghazala, 2008, p.89). Some linguists believe that full synonyms do not exist in any language (Quine 1951; Cruse 1986, p.270) but partial synonyms are the ones that cause translation problems between the two linguistically diverse languages; Arabic and English (Abdelaal N., 2020, p.106). In this particular issue of translation, context and the translator's intuition play a vital role in translating from English into Arabic since the latter is a language wealthy of synonyms. For instance, the Arabic verbs 'أكل' and 'تناول' are sometimes used interchangeably to mean the English verb 'eat' as in 'أكل الطعام' and 'تناول الطعام', but in various contexts such as 'تناول الكلمة' and 'تناول الكتاب' the verb 'تناول' denotes a totally different meaning which can be translated as 'he spoke' and 'he took the book'. Cognitive synonymy can be challenging in translating concepts that are connotatively different such as the difference between the verbs 'يغضب' and 'يحسد' or the nouns 'مطر' and 'غيث' and in English the difference between 'liberty' and 'freedom' (N. Abdelaal, 2020, p.106). The Arabic words 'يغضب' and 'يحسد' can be both translated as 'envy' while they imply totally

different connotations. Also, 'مطر' and 'غيث' are connotatively different and cannot be both translated as 'rain' especially in religious texts since 'مطر' has a negative meaning that denotes a sort of rain that carries torment and punishment but 'غيث' stands for a rain that carries blessing and mercy which results in a shift in meaning in English as a target language. In these challenging cases of translation, Newmark (1988) believes that componential analysis is necessary to understand the differences between synonyms. For him, analyzing the components of words is the right tool to decide on the most relevant equivalent.

c) Polysemy

The challenge of translating polysemous words lies in the multiplicity of meanings of certain words or expressions that pose significant problems for translators. Translating polysemous words between Arabic and English is somewhat misleading due to their various interpretations and meanings regarding their contexts and situations. Arabic and English are languages that share this common feature of polysemy and that have a direct effect on the communication of meaning (N. Abdelaal, 2020, p.103). So, in order for translators to come up with adequate equivalents to polysemous words, it is essential to consider the contexts where the words are used. Translation problems concerning polysemy may rise with the absence of context or even at the presence of unclear linguistic situations. There are ample examples to illustrate this particular translation difficulty. The verb 'أتى', for instance; has different meanings according to contexts where it is used especially in the holy Quran. The verb 'أتى' comes at six various contexts in the Quran. It means:

- 'To approach' in (يَسْأَلُكُمْ خَزَنَتُ لَكُمْ فَاُولَئِكَ اَنْتُمْ شَيْئُهُنَّ) (Your wives are like farmland for you, so **approach** them consensually as you please) (ALBAQARA, 223)
- 'To grant' in (يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا) (Allah **grants** wisdom to whoever He wills. And whoever is **granted** wisdom is certainly blessed with a great privilege) (ALBAQARA, 269)
- 'To commit lewdness' in (وَالَّذِي يَأْتِيَنَّكَ الْفُجْأَةُ مِنْ نِسَائِكَ فَاسْتَشْهِدُوا) ('As for' those of your women who **commit illegal intercourse**—call four witnesses from among yourselves) (AN-NISA, 15)
- 'To come' in (يَا خَسْرَةً عَلَى الْعِبَادِ مَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ) (Oh pity, such beings! No messenger ever **came** to them without being mocked) (YA-SIN, 30)
- 'To bring' in (بِئْرٍ الْحَدِيدِ) (Bring me blocks of iron) (AL-KAHF, 96)
- 'To commit lusts' in (إِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِنْ دُونِ النِّسَاءِ) (أنتم قومٌ مُسْرِفُونَ) (You **lust** after men instead of women! You are certainly transgressors) (AL-A'RAF, 81) (Essam T. Mohammed, 2009, p.5)

One more example is the word 'قلب' (heart) which has several meanings in Arabic and can be used metaphorically in different situations and contexts such as 'قلب الحدث', 'قلب', 'قلب السيارة', and 'قلب الاقتصاد'. These can respectively be translated into English as 'the center of the event', 'the heart of the Quran', 'the engine of the car', and 'the heart of the economy; that is, agriculture'.

Likewise, English has also got numerous examples of polysemous words that can represent a challenge for translators. The word 'break' (كسر) for instance has diverse

meanings and can be used in distinct situations like: 'Break the window', 'break the law', 'break the silence', 'break the record', and 'break a leg' which are different of the expression 'have a break', that are translated into Arabic as 'كسر الرقم القياسي', 'كسر طوق الصمت', 'خرق القانون', 'كسر النافذة', 'حطماً سعيدياً', and 'أخذ قسطاً من الراحة' (Ghazala, 2008, pp.98-99). The verb is translated into Arabic to various equivalents that serve the context thereto. So, it is important to take the linguistic, the situational and the cultural contexts into consideration in order to come up with accurate equivalents to polysemous words.

d) Homonymy

Homonyms are words that are spelled or pronounced the same but they have different meanings. Homonyms can be divided into two categories; homophones and homographs. Homophones are two words that sound the same with distinct meanings whereas homographs are two words that are spelled the same with different connotations. "Flour" (a powder used in baking) and "flower" (a plant) are examples of homophones; that is, words that have the same pronunciation but are different in meaning. "Bank" (a financial institution) and "bank" (the side of the river), "lead" /led/ (a metal) and "lead" /li:d/ (a guide) are homographs that sound the same and spell the same but have different meanings and usage either. These types of lexemes can sometimes present a challenge for translators if relevant contexts are not available. When faced with sentences like "we met in the bank", "take the lead", translators can be confused with the two connotations of the words and thus come up with inappropriate equivalents.

In the Arabic language there are many examples of homonyms that can be classified as grammatical homonyms and that can cause serious problems for translators. Grammatical homonyms mean words that are similar in either spelling or pronunciation but they differ in the grammatical categories (Ahmed M. A., 2010, p.3). For example; the words "مَحْكَمَةٌ" (the book) and "الْمَحْكَمَةُ" (the Qur'anic school), "مَحْكَمَةٌ" (court) and "مُحْكَمَةٌ" (firm), "مُسَيَّرَةٌ" (march) and "مُسَيَّرَةٌ" (directed), can at times be challenging translational situations. So, rendering this type of lexemes without considering their various meanings can lead to corrupted target texts.

e) Culture-Specific Concepts

One more type of lexical-semantic non-equivalence is the absence of direct target language concepts when translating between two culturally distinct languages (Baker 2017). These are the concepts that are related to social, religious, legal lexical repertoire of a particular language for which the target language has no specific equivalents. Baker (2017) argues that when translating these types of concepts, translators must either find a cultural substitution or paraphrase these concepts to convey their meaning.

On the whole, lexical-semantic problems in translation incorporate a vast array of problems that have also a direct association with the cultural background rather than pure lexical and semantic field. Eponyms, acronyms, collocations, rhetorical devices, and idioms are lexemes interpreted based on the cultural reference of the source language.

3. Previous Studies

Non-equivalence at the lexical level in translating between Arabic and English is an important issue that was covered by multiple studies. Noureldin Abdelaal (2020) examined the problem of finding lexical-semantic equivalents between Arabic and English. He stated that the major lexical problem is translating metaphorical meaning as non-metaphorical meaning, in addition to the problems of translating synonyms, near-synonyms, polysemous items, collocations, lexical gaps, and homonyms. Saraireh (1990) noted that “lexical problems could be related to two main sources: the linguistic components of lexical items, and the cultural factors which determine the selection of lexical items” (p.86). Sadiq (2010) also addressed this particular issue and pointed that lexical problems in Arabic-English translation arise due to the absence of TL counterpart, the different Function of the TL counterpart, words with opposite meanings, eponyms, acronyms, proper names, and abbreviations.

3.1 EFL Students Translation Context

1) Vocabulary limitations

Since the study addresses the lexical-semantic challenges EFL students face when translating between Arabic and English particularly in the Moroccan context, it is essential to draw attention on the shortage of correlational studies covering the relationship between EFL students limited vocabulary repertoire and their translation output in the Moroccan university. However, Paul Nation (2001) stresses the paramount role vocabulary play in the English as a Foreign Language Learning. He mentions that building strong language skills requires a solid lexical foundation that can facilitate communication in the foreign language. For him, language fluency depends on unlimited lexical knowledge. Likewise, Batia Laufer (1997) highlights the significance of learners' lexicon in language leaning, emphasizing the importance of learners' broad and wide vocabulary range in language learning proficiency.

Thus, translation performance of EFL learners entails having a solid lexical background to face the different types of meanings while rendering messages between source and target languages. The ability to find relevant lexical equivalents in the target language is vital to any translational outcome. Lexical problems arise when EFL learners face challenging types of vocabulary such as polysemy, synonymy, collocations, idioms and untranslatable words that are culturally specific to particular languages.

2) Cultural Context

Culture-specific items or culture-bound terms are lexemes that are mostly difficult to translate or that cannot be translated directly owing to their cultural background. EFL students in Moroccan university might struggle to find equivalent translations that adequately convey the source language meaning. Vocabulary items such as euphemisms and idiomatic expressions are certainly challenging concepts to translate across Arabic and English without an extensive cultural knowledge of both source and target cultures.

Most translation scholars such as Peter Newmark (1988), Eugene Nida (1964), Lawrence Venuti (1995), Mona Baker

(1992), Susan Bassnett (1980), and Basil Hatim and Ian Mason (1990), emphasize the importance of cultural competence in translation. Munday (2016) stressed what Bassnett and Lefevere entitled the cultural turn which means the move from the mere linguistic rendition in translation processes to the cultural aspects including ideologies, translation as rewriting, and postcolonial translations (Munday, 2016, p.198). Nida (1964) also advocates the significance of the receptors' reaction to the translated message which for him must be similar to the one in the original message. His notion of 'dynamic equivalence' which is also referred to as 'functional equivalence' implies that the converting process must go beyond the strict transmission of the form or structure to conveying the soul and spirit of the original taking into account the cultural context, idiomatic expressions, and linguistic differences between the two languages (Nida, 1964). Similarly, Hatim and Mason (1990) advocate the need for the functional equivalence, emphasizing on the pragmatic aspect of translating messages from one language to another. They maintain that cultural knowledge is an important component of translating between languages and that translators must bear in mind the cultural context that underly messages in the source language to appropriately convey the intended meaning.

Thus, since cultural aspects play a crucial role in translation, it is important that EFL learners possess an adequate cross-cultural background to help while translating between Arabic and English. Understanding the cross-cultural similarities and differences including norms, values, idiomatic expressions, and historical events can certainly enhance learners translation quality and maintain a well-rounded navigation of texts across Arabic and English.

3) Pedagogical context

Prior to their introduction to translation courses, students at Ibn Tofail university cover a variety of courses in the first, second and third semesters. These semesters include modules such as Guided Reading, Composition, Extensive Reading, grammar, cultural studies and others. These subjects are devised to equip EFL students with a strong linguistic and cultural foundation to handle the translation challenges and to face the complexities of rendering messages across Arabic and English.

As far as the translation studies program is concerned, students at Ibn Tofail university are not initiated to translation courses until semester four. The first contact with translation studies tends to:

- Enable students make sense of the process of translation and the motivations underlying the importance of translating.
- Introduce students to the nature of transition from source language to target language.
- Enable students know and deal with the different language and cultural elements involved in the process of translation.
- Make students aware of the major problems and challenges of translating words and texts.
- Train students to properly translate such culturally specific constructs as idiomatic expressions.

In the literature option, students' second translation courses are scheduled in their fifth semester wherein the objectives of the course can be summarized as follows:

- To study strategies unique to each genre (legal and economic)
- To train students in translating legal and business texts
- To familiarize students with translation in professional life
- To prepare students for further courses in translation.

In semester six, literature option students are exposed to a module entitled "Advanced Multilingual Translation". This module enhances students' English linguistic competence and proficiency in English through exposing them to Arabic, French and English translation tasks. The student should progress toward the ability to handle fairly complex texts and ideas in the three languages and cultures. Thus, the students are introduced to the importance of reading and analyzing the source text prior to translating it. They are also led to analyze and appraise their linguistic concepts and their translation analytical tools.

4. Methodology

1) Participants

The study sample is a group of fifty-two Moroccan EFL students from the department of English studies at Ibn Tofail university in Morocco. They have already studied Arabic throughout primary, middle and high schools. The students are currently in their final semester of the English as a foreign language learning program that lasts for three years which takes six semesters in total. They have been exposed to various English courses in different modules including translation courses.

The target population participate in a translation test targeting their lexical-semantic competence in translating multiple

lexical items between both Arabic and English. This particular group have been selected to conduct a study on the lexical-semantic challenges that arise while translating between these two distinct languages -Arabic and English.

2) Data Collection

Data are collected via a translation test consisting of five English and five Arabic sentences that were carefully selected based on two important translation resources; the first is Hassan Ghazala's "*Translation as Problems and Solutions*" and the second is Nouredin Abdelaal's "*Translation Between English and Arabic*". The ten English and Arabic sentences try to capture students' skills in handling lexical issues such as synonymy, euphemism, collocations and idiomatic expressions.

The types of challenges under study are the most problematic issues for EFL learners in translating lexical-semantic items between Arabic and English. They not only entail a good knowledge of vocabulary items, but also an appropriate understanding of the different cultural and contextual variations across the two languages. Both Arabic and English sample sentences tend to test EFL learners' translation competence after completing the designed translation courses.

The translation test is conducted at the final course of students' sixth semester. Students have been allotted one hour to complete the test and have been instructed on the way the test should be handled. Students are allowed to use dictionaries but not to consult any online translation website or application. Upon completion, students' responses are collected and stored for analysis.

3) Evaluation

The ten sample sentences used in the translation test are categorized as follows:

Table 1: Translation test sample sentences and lexical-semantic issues.

Sentences	Lexical-semantic Categories
1. This medicine will break you of smoking.	Synonymy
2. I had no idea that she had gone to meet her maker .	Euphemism
3. A sigh of relief came out of the phone when she heard that the baby is right and proper	Collocation
4. It is midnight! let's hit the sack	Idiom
5. Hold your horses ; we still have plenty of time.	Idiom
6. صار جهاد الشعوب لنيل حريتها واستقلالها واحترام إرادتها إرهابا (The struggle of peoples for freedom and independence has become labeled as terrorism.)	Lack of lexicalization
7. يتناول هذا البحث إشكاليات الترجمة (This research addresses translation problems.)	Synonymy
8. توفي وهو في عمر الزهور (He passed away in the prime of his youth.)	Euphemism
9. لقد أخذ قرارا صائبا بالعودة إلى بلاده (He made the right decision to return to his country.)	Collocation
10. كفى، لقد بلغ السيل الزبي (Enough is enough)	Idiomatic expression

The evaluation of the sample is conducted with the assistance of a correction jury of two linguistics professors at Ibn Tofail university to ensure reliability and validity of the assessment. They agreed upon the relevant translations of the given

sentences as well as the appropriate evaluation criteria and grading scale. The correction jury decided on the following method of correcting students' responses (full credit, partial credit, no credit):

Table 2: Grading scale of the translation test correction:

Category	Grade 01	Grade 0,5	Grade 00
Lexical-semantic issues	Correct lexical equivalent + appropriate TL	Correct lexical equivalent + inappropriate TL	Incorrect lexical equivalent + inappropriate TL

- **Full credit:** Students possess a good lexical-semantic competence. They can provide appropriate lexical equivalents in the target language.
- **Partial credit:** Students can understand lexical item and provide correct TL equivalent but with inappropriate TL usage.
- **No credit:** Students fail to come up with correct TL lexical equivalents along with appropriate TL usage showing a serious issue in understanding lexical-semantic challenges.

5. Data Analysis Method

Data are analysed using a thematic analysis method, approaching the issues with regard to the themes identified in students' responses within the framework of the qualitative analysis method. Using feedback from the correction jury, thematic analysis is relevant to this study as it highlights specific lexical-semantic issues where students struggle the most to provide correct equivalents in the target language.

6. Results

6.1 Frequency of errors

The test participants reach fifty-two students whose responses are carefully examined and categorized according to the types of lexical-semantic issues encountered across the two languages. The following table demonstrates the frequency of lexical-semantic translation errors revealed in students' responses.

Table 3: Errors' frequency according to each category in English sentences:

Lexical-semantic challenges	Frequency	percentages
Synonymy	40	76.92%
Euphemism	32	61.54%
Collocation	28	53.85%
Idiom	48	92.31%

Table 5: The correction jury's feedback on both English and Arabic sentences:

	Lexical-semantic Categories	Number of responses	Full credit (01)	Partial credit (0.5)	No credit (00)	Percentage of Errors in "No credit" cases
English sentences	Synonymy	52	2	10	40	76.92%
	Euphemism	52	9	11	32	61.54%
	Collocation	52	12	12	28	53.85%
	Idiom 1	52	1	3	48	92.31%
	Idiom 2	52	0	4	48	92.31%
Arabic sentences	Lack of lexicalization	52	1	5	46	88.46%
	Synonymy	52	3	31	18	34.62%
	Euphemism	52	3	1	48	92.31%
	Collocation	52	5	31	16	30.77%
	Idiom	52	2	2	48	92.31%

The number of responses that get "no credit" reaches high rates in translating "idioms" from and into English and Arabic (92.31%), translating English "synonym" into Arabic (76.92%), as well as the translation of Arabic "euphemism" into English (92.31%), and Arabic case of "lack of lexicalization" (88.46%). This indicates that students struggle in translating "synonyms" in both directions and in rendering Arabic "euphemism" and "lack of lexicalization" case into English showing a difficulty in finding appropriate equivalents.

Table 4: Errors' frequency according to each category in Arabic sentences

Lexical-semantic challenges	Frequency	percentages
Lack of lexicalization	46	88.64%
Synonymy	18	34.61%
Euphemism	48	92.30%
Collocation	16	30.76%
Idiom	48	92.30%

The findings reveal that semester six students of the department of English studies at Ibn Tofail university in Morocco face serious issues in translating lexical items from and into both Arabic and English. The high frequency of errors shows that students struggle to find appropriate equivalents for synonyms, euphemism, collocations, and idiomatic expressions across the two languages. Table 3 shows that although problems in translating "collocations", "euphemism" and "synonymy" show high frequency, the highest number of errors is observed in "idiomatic expressions" with a percentage of 92.31%. These results present "idiomatic expressions" to be the most prevalent errors in students' responses owing probably to the difficulty in translating culture-specific lexical items. In table 4, the highest percentages of errors are prevalent in translating Arabic "euphemism", idiomatic expressions", and cases of "lack of lexicalization" with rates that reach 92.30% and 88.64% respectively.

6.2 The correction jury's feedback

The jury's correction of students' translations results in totally similar findings shown in tables 3 and 4 on the frequency of errors. This reveals that the correction jury's feedback correlates clearly with the high rates of errors' frequency in students' responses. The table below shows precisely this correlation.

It also evident that a good number of "partial credit" grades is given to responses translating "synonymy" in the two languages with 31 cases in Arabic and 10 in English, which show that students could provide correct equivalents but with inappropriate target language demonstrating an inability in translating the context of the lexical items.

6.3 Common Errors

Firstly, analysing students' responses carefully highlights notable difficulty in translating idiomatic expressions in both languages. Out of 52 responses, 48 received "no credit" grade, showing the same rates in both directions translation (92.31%). The table 6 show the correct translations of the given idiomatic expression in English and Arabic.

Table 6: Correct translations of idiomatic expressions

Idiomatic expressions	Correct translation
It is midnight! let's hit the sack	إنه منتصف الليل، لنذهب (لنخلد) للنوم.
Hold your horses ; we still have plenty of time.	تمهل (هون عليك)، لا زال لدينا الكثير من الوقت.
كفى، لقد بلغ السيل الزبى	Enough is Enough. (The situation has become unbearable)

Literal translation of idiomatic expressions is the common error shared in most students' responses providing inappropriate equivalents and hence irrelevant target language. For instance, "let's hit the sack" is literally translated as "دعنا ننتهز"، "لنسرقة الكيس"، "دعنا نضرب الكيس"، or "الفرصة"، which are all incorrect equivalents to the exact meaning of "لنذهب (لنخلد) للنوم". "Hold your horses" is another example of idiomatic expressions where students fail to find the exact equivalent and provided responses such as "لا تدع"، "هدئ من سرعة خيولك"، "أوقف خيولك"، "أمسك خيولك"، "خيولك تهرب" showing a lack of understanding of the intended meaning "تمهل (هون عليك)". Additionally, students show an inability to provide a correct equivalent of the Arabic idiom "لقد بلغ السيل الزبى" and presented responses such as: "The flood reached the peak", "The flood has crossed the line", "The stream has reached its end", and "The water has reached the limit".

Secondly, translating "euphemism" in both Arabic and English represent a real issue according to students' responses. The 32 and 48 responses with "no credit" grades demonstrate students' struggle to come up with relevant equivalents to "euphemism" across the two languages.

Table 7: Correct translations of Arabic and English euphemism:

Euphemism	Correct translation
I had no idea that she had gone to meet her maker .	لم أكن أعلم أنها توفيت (انتقلت إلى الرفيق الأعلى)
توفي وهو في عمر الزهور	He passed away in the prime of his youth (at a young age)

Scrutinizing responses indicates a serious difficulty in translating the English euphemism into Arabic. For example: students translated the expression "I had no idea that she had gone to meet her maker" into "لم يكن لدي فكرة بأنها رحلت"، "لم يكن لدي علم أنها ذهبت للقاء سيدها"، "أعلم أنها ستلتقي بصانعها"، and "لم أكن أعلم أنها ذهبت للقاء معلمها" which do not meet the exact meaning of the euphemism "died" or "passed away" that is "انتقلت إلى الرفيق الأعلى" or "توفيت". Even students' responses that provided the expression "ستلاقي خالقها" is not accepted as a correct equivalent of the given euphemism. In the Arabic euphemism "توفي وهو في عمر الزهور" most students presented inadequate equivalents such as "He died in the flower age" and "He died in the age of flowers". These findings suggests

that students are unable to translate simple contextualized euphemisms across the two languages.

Thirdly, data show that translating synonymy is another common challenge among students. Students demonstrate a lack of understanding of the synonymous word given in the English sentences.

Table 8: Correct translation of the English synonymous word.

Synonymy	Correct translation
This medicine will break you of smoking.	سيخلصك هذا الدواء من التدخين

Examples from students' responses show cases where students failed to translate the verb "break" within the context "This medicine will break you of smoking" into Arabic. For example: "هذا الدواء سيوقفك عن التدخين"، "هذا الدواء سيساعدك في الامتناع عن التدخين"، "التدخين"، "هذا الدواء سينجيك التدخين"، "التدخين" are inadequate translations to the sentence and the synonymous word given. Students who received a "full credit" in this particular sentence did not respect the Arabic word order of (verb + subject + object/complement) wherein the majority of responses started the sentence using the object "هذا الدواء" instead of the verb which cannot be accepted as a correct equivalent of the structure provided.

The last common lexical-semantic problem encountered in the results is the difficulty in finding an equivalent to the case of lack of lexicalization which Baker (2018) identifies as being a type of 'concepts which is known in the target culture but simply not lexicalized, that is not 'allocated' a target-language word to express it' (p.20). The word "جهاد" is an unlexicalized concept in English when it is associated with religious connotations. However, in the example provided "صار جهاد الشعوب لنيل حريتها واستقلالها واحترام إرادتها إرهاباً" (The struggle of peoples for freedom and independence has become labelled as terrorism), the word "جهاد" does not imply a religious meaning and hence cannot be transliterated when translating it into English. Most responses were able to give the exact equivalent of the word "جهاد", but failed to provide the contextualized meaning of the whole sentence. Examples of students' correct word equivalent but with inappropriate target language are listed as follows:

- "The struggle of people to get their freedom and independence and the respect of their will terrorism"
- "The struggle of people to gain their freedom become terrorism"
- "The fight of populations for their freedom, independence and free will turned into terrorism"
- "People's fight to gain freedom, independence and the respect of their free will became a form of terrorism"

Some students could provide relevant equivalent to the word "جهاد" but in a totally incorrect target language. The word "جهاد" denotes "peoples' struggle" which is translated correctly in most of the responses but with unacceptable target language structure. Some responses presented a distorted target language using the word "fight" as an equivalent of the source language "جهاد" which is considered

overly aggressive and physical than the general connotation intended.

According to the correction jury's feedback, "partial credit" grades' high rates are given to responses where students provided correct equivalents to the lexical item intended but they failed to use it correctly within the target language structure or vice versa. Some show inability in presenting adequate grammatical, syntactic or pragmatic target language structure. In translating the English collocations "a sigh of relief" and "right and proper", although students translated the general meaning of the source language sentence, they did not manage to present correct equivalents of the collocations. They mostly translated "a sigh of relief" as "أحست", "تنهيدة راحة", "بالطمأنينة", "أحست بالراحة", "أطمأنت", "تنهدت بالطمأنينة", which are unacceptable equivalents.

6.4 Sentences' Analysis

With reference to the correction jury's grading results, a significant number of students struggle in the majority of the lexical-semantic challenges investigated in this study. Translating idiomatic expressions in both directions is evidently a problematic issue. Out 52 responses, a single case got a "full credit" in the translation of the first English idiom "It is midnight! let's hit the sack", three responses with "partial credit", and 48 responses received "no credit". In the second English idiomatic expression "Hold your horses; we still have plenty of time", no responses got "full credit" grade, with only 4 "partial credit" responses, and 48 responses with "no credit". Similarly, Arabic idiom also represent a real challenging translation problem. In translating "لقد بلغ السيل الزبى" only two responses provided a correct equivalent with "full credit" grade, two "partial credit" and also 48 "no credit" responses. This suggests that the most common lexical-semantic translation challenge among students is the rendition of idiomatic expressions across Arabic and English as well as an apparent inability to understand the context in which idiomatic expressions are presented.

The second most frequent lexical-semantic challenge in students' responses is the translation of euphemisms in both Arabic and English. The euphemisms "To meet her maker" and "في عمر الزهور" were mistranslated in 32 and 48 responses respectively. Only 9 responses in the English euphemism and 3 in the Arabic one received a "full credit" grade and 11 in English and 2 in Arabic got "partial credit".

Translating collocations is another recurrent lexical-semantic problem within students' responses. Out of 52, 12 responses succeeded to get a "full credit" grade in translating the English given collocation, 12 responses took "partial credit" and 28 with "no credit" grades. The Arabic example was well translated only in 5 responses, with 31 receiving a "partial credit" and 16 obtaining "no credit" grade.

Additionally, the case of lack of lexicalization can be considered one more frequent lexical-semantic issue in students' responses. Students struggle to give equivalent target language when it comes to unlexicalized vocabulary item in Arabic. The word "جهاد" is an unlexicalized lexical item when it entails a religious connotation. But, in the sentence given the meaning intended does not imply a

religious meaning and thus the equivalent "struggle" is acceptable in this case. Nevertheless, most responses failed to translate it into English within the context given. Only one response could provide an appropriate translation, with 5 responses that received "partial credit", but 46 responses obtained "no credit" for the irrelevant translation submitted.

Finally, synonymous items in English can also be challenging to translate into Arabic. Many responses provided an improper equivalent to the verb "break" in the context given. 40 responses got "no credit", 10 with "partial credit" and 2 responses had a "full credit" grade. While the difficulty in translating the Arabic synonymous word given is less frequent than the English one in students' responses. Out 52, only 16 got "no credit" grade, 31 took "partial credit" grade, and merely 3 cases received the "full credit" grade.

The subsequent discussion section of this study tries to elaborate more on the various interpretations of the results, providing an explanation of the high rates of particular lexical-semantic translation issues.

7. Discussion

7.1 Interpretation of Findings

Regarding the high rates of the majority of lexical-semantic translation challenges investigated in this study, it is apparent that participant students struggle to find correct target language in almost all the categories of lexical issues. The major prominent challenges include "idiomatic expressions", "euphemisms", and "collocations" which are the most frequent problems in students' responses.

The common pattern among these three lexical issues is their cultural implication where EFL students lack the necessary background to handle culture-bound terms adequately. Translating categories such as "idioms" requests a proper understanding of cross-cultural differences between the source and target languages. This cultural translation competence should be the focus of students' translation training to be able to handle challenging translation concepts and convey the intended meaning accurately.

Similarly, translating euphemisms introduce significant challenges between the source and target language. Given that euphemisms are words or expressions used to mitigate offensive or unpleasant connotations, they often imply a cultural knowledge of the context where they are used. Hence, translating these types of lexemes without taking their cultural sensitivity into account will result in a completely distorted target language.

Significant rates of lexical challenges are also evident in students' translation of collocations between Arabic and English. These types of lexemes also require special cultural and linguistic background knowledge across the two languages to be able to go through rendering these vocabulary items in a relevant manner. A collocation is a combination of two or three words that co-occur side by side and that are frequently used together. This type of lexical units cannot be translated from one language into another unless the translator is well equipped with the necessary knowledge between the

two languages. A knowledge that entails an appropriate background on the linguistic and cultural similarities and differences across Arabic and English as well as the necessary translation competencies to deal with different translation challenges.

In addition, while difficulties in translating synonyms and finding correct equivalents for unlexicalized words appear less frequent in students' feedback, they still remain serious challenges to the translation process, leading to the distortion of meaning when approached inadequately. Finding correct equivalents for synonyms and unlexicalized concepts requires deeper understanding of the linguistic variations between languages. In translating synonyms, difficulties may arise when rendering words with variety of connotations, usage, and degrees of formality. To overcome these challenges, students must be equipped with the necessary lexical-semantic knowledge to come up with the most appropriately contextualized lexical item intended. Likewise, word-for-word equivalents for unlexicalized terms are never possible which demands a unique translation competence to handle culture-bound lexical items such as paraphrasing or descriptive translation.

In general, these recurrent types of lexical-semantic translation challenges share two important patterns in common: cultural knowledge background and lexical-semantic awareness. EFL students need a well-rounded insight on these essential translation competencies to address the translation intricacies effectively.

7.2 Possible Reasons

Given the jury's feedback on the prevalent types of lexical-semantic problems EFL students face in translating between Arabic and English and the analysis of students' responses, it is notable that students struggle in translating various contextualized lexical items owing to the limited vocabulary repertoire, insufficient cultural awareness, overgeneralization of the literal translation technique, and the limited translation practice.

First, finding correct equivalents in translating synonymous lexical items and cases of unlexicalized concepts in the target language refers to the lexical-semantic competence in translating between Arabic and English. This particular translation competence necessitates enough exposure to various types of texts. Extensive reading in both languages is the key to strengthen students' lexical-semantic competence and their ability to understand the various distinctions between lexical items.

Second, cultural awareness plays a crucial role in translating culture-specific items between Arabic and English. The cultural context is deeply embedded in expressions such as idioms, euphemisms, and collocations which demands a culturally solid background on both languages to attain coherent equivalents that fit the source language intended connotations. Going through cultural-bound texts on both languages to unveil the fine cultural dissimilarities is the key to develop students' cultural awareness and translation competence.

Third, the challenging cases of lexical-semantic translation urge students to opt for the literal translation technique which often distorts the source language meaning and the natural structure of the target language. Translating idiomatic expressions, euphemisms or collocations require students' mastery of alternative translation techniques such as paraphrasing, adaptation or modulation, techniques that help rendering cultural-bound concepts and convey a natural target language lexically and semantically. Students' exposure to the various translation techniques can equip them with the necessary tools to navigate different translation challenges and particularly lexical-semantic ones effectively.

Fourth, to improve students' translation competence thoroughly, they need to cover multiple text genres. Applying translation strategies to variety of texts including literal, religious, formal, colloquial can enhance students' translation competence and improve their skills in handling lexical-semantic challenges on multiple levels. In addition, navigating authentic texts with cultural background can equip students with enough experience and significant know-how to render culture-bound terms into different cultural contexts using the relevant translation strategies and thus producing culturally and contextually accurate target language.

Finally, the aforementioned points summarize the main reasons behind students' struggle with lexical-semantic challenges when translating between Arabic and English. Addressing these areas in translation education can enhance students' competencies and improve their ability to navigate challenging lexical-semantic aspects when rendering messages across Arabic and English.

7.3 Comparison with the Literature

Since very few studies have addressed this particular issue of lexical-semantic challenges in translating between Arabic and English within the Moroccan context, this study is an attempt to enrich the translation literature by presenting authentic findings generated from students' responses. The study highlights students' real-world struggles with particular lexical items and provides an understanding of these specific translation intricacies. It, additionally, demonstrates that translation challenges encountered by EFL students is an important field of study that deserves more academic attention to engage in an effective improvement of translation education. The findings, on the other hand, aligns with Fouad Akki's (2007) "Comparative Study of Arabic-English-Arabic Translation Constraints among EFL Students". Both investigations acknowledge students' vast array of problems including vocabulary, grammar, syntax etc...when rendering messages between the two languages.

Yet, some studies have touched upon this translation issue in contexts outside of Morocco and particularly in middle east. Quassem (2011), from Aden university in Yemen, investigated EFL students ability to translate polysemous words from Arabic into English. He carried out a translation test of fifteen sentences from Arabic into English whose statistical analysis showed an evident difficulty among EFL students in translating polysemous words. Students' lack of competence to find exact equivalents resulted in awkward sentence structures and thus unsatisfactory English

translations. Reima Al-jarf (2007) from the university of Riyadh in Saudi Arabia also explored the issue of translating polysemes between Arabic and English. Her findings summarized what has been proven in the current study and demonstrated students' limited vocabulary knowledge and unfamiliarity with effective translation strategies to deal with challenging translation tasks.

Thus, all previous studies complement one another in the fact that EFL students encounter serious issues in providing adequate lexical equivalents between Arabic and English. They all agreed upon the prominent role lexical competence play in translating between languages and called for more practical strategies to enhance EFL students translation competencies and consequently the overall translation education.

7.4 Implications for EFL Education

Given the importance of vocabulary in language learning and particularly in translation education, more focus is to be made on the amelioration of EFL students' lexical-semantic competence. The findings of the study suggest that EFL students struggle to find adequate equivalents for synonymous items, collocations, euphemisms, and idiomatic expressions which can be handled by a more targeted practice on linguistic and cultural nuances between Arabic and English. Educators could present an accurate translation curriculum that accounts for the linguistic and cultural dissimilarities across the two languages, reinforcing EFL students' translation skills through extensive reading-comprehension activities, culturally rich texts, and more word choice practice. By exposing EFL students to various translation tasks incorporating effective approaches to synonyms, collocations, euphemisms, idioms and cultural gaps, the curriculum can also strengthen students' translation techniques such as paraphrasing, adaptation and modulation. This well-rounded approach to understanding lexical-semantic issues in translation is a practical strategy to develop EFL students' confidence and competence in handling a variety of translation challenges effectively.

8. Conclusion

8.1 Summary of Key Findings

This study contributes to the understanding of EFL students' prevalent lexical-semantic problems when rendering messages between two distinct languages, Arabic and English. It underscores several lexical issues where EFL students at Ibn Tofail university in Kenitra, Morocco, find difficulties in translating between Arabic and English. These translation challenges include synonyms, idiomatic expressions, euphemisms, collocations, as well as cases of unlexicalized terms in the target language.

The apparent high rates of students' struggles with these linguistic and cultural areas when moving across the two languages demonstrate the need for a focused curriculum that takes into account students' translation technical competencies alongside their linguistic, cultural and contextual skills. An integrative instructional approach is required to enhance students' ability in targeting lexical-

semantic intricacies and develop their Arabic/English translation competence effectively.

8.2 Recommendations

In their attempt to build strong translation skills, translation educators in the academic context are recommended to focus basically on developing students' lexical-semantic consciousness along with other sub-competences (PACTE,2005). Educators could integrate various text genres in students' reading tasks to help them explore different language styles, practice different translation strategies and manage challenges related to word choice. They also need to expose learners to culturally embedded texts and strategic ways to engage with culture-bound items applying techniques such as paraphrasing and adaptation. Furthermore, regarding the vital role of context in translation, students could improve their contextual awareness by navigating diverse linguistic and cultural contexts to understand intended messages properly. With this EFL program, students can maintain a strong lexical-semantic foundation that enables them to meet various translation challenges with greater confidence and proficiency.

8.3 Limitations

The present study does not claim to present an inclusive understanding of the lexical-semantic challenges phenomenon met by EFL students across academic setting inside or outside Morocco, it only explores few types of the lexical issues contributing in meaning distortion in students' translations between Arabic and English and in a limited scope. Still, many other lexical-semantic intricacies in students' translation between the same languages need to be investigated such as the problems of rendering metaphorical meaning, polysemy and monosemy, proverbs, acronyms and abbreviations using larger participants and more data. Additionally, it was beyond the reach of this small study to cover other types of linguistic challenges in translating between Arabic and English namely; grammatical, syntactic, pragmatic and rhetorical problems which exceed the limits of such an article. Future studies can also be geared towards investigating EFL students' understanding of translation theories, mastery of translation techniques and application of translation strategies with challenging translation areas. This limited investigation is an attempt to prompt prospective studies to participate altogether in a holistic translation pedagogy development.

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